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S/S-S MEMORANDUM TO: The Cabinet

TMB

AF

FROM: Jack Watson *Jack*

ARA

EA

EUR

RE: CIA Memorandum/Impact of US  
Stand on Human Rights

NEA

INR

RF-WS

I am attaching for your information  
a memorandum describing the international  
impact of the US policy on human rights.  
I think the information in the memorandum  
will be both interesting and useful to you.

Attachment

July 9, 1977

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP

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MEMORANDUM FOR DR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Human Rights Policy Impact: Latin America

The Carter Administration's human rights policy is having a significant impact in Latin America. A good many Latin American governments have reacted negatively, but some of these have nonetheless taken steps to improve their performance. There have been numerous indications of approval in important sectors of Latin American public opinion. Of course these generalizations should be treated with caution.

The United States Government's new higher priority for human rights, as reflected in Administration speeches and statements, diplomatic representations, military aid cuts, actions taken on IFI loans, and Congressional hearings, has caused the governments of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Guatemala, and El Salvador to reject, in whole or in part, security assistance predicated on human rights considerations (actually the Brazilian Government attributed its reaction to the issuance of our Brazil Human Rights Report, a decision made prior to the Carter Administration). Leaders in these and other governments have expressed resentment and concern, as well as some bewilderment, at the United States Government's human rights stand. Many in Latin American ruling circles regard our actions and words as intervention in their domestic affairs and a self-defeating abandonment of old allies who are fighting a common enemy, international Communism. This reaction has been reflected in pro-government press comment, at least some of which has been directly inspired by local regimes.

Department of State, AGIS/IPS/SMP

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On the other hand, some officials of these governments have privately expressed approval of the Carter human rights policy. And a significant minority of Latin American governments, including those of Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Colombia, have openly voiced their support.

Impact on the actual human rights performance of Latin American governments has also been mixed, with a few regimes taking more progressive and repressive measures at the same time. In some cases our human rights campaign seems to have strengthened the hand of hardliners (e.g., in Brazil, Uruguay and probably in Argentina), at least temporarily. The Geisel Government has used alleged Yankee intervention in Brazil's domestic affairs, specifically the Government of Brazil's nuclear energy and human rights performance, to rally domestic support for its policies. Geisel has subsequently weakened the legal opposition MDB through amendment of the Constitution by Executive Decree. However, there is no question but that a good many Latin American governments have become increasingly concerned about their human rights image. Some undoubtedly have been influenced, consciously and/or unconsciously, to release prisoners (e.g., Chile, Paraguay and Haiti), to caution security officers against excesses (e.g., Brazil and Nicaragua), to refrain from repressive actions which otherwise might have been taken, etc. Some of these positive results were already underway even before the Carter Administration, partly as a result of Congressional stimulus. The net incremental changes are difficult to identify and impossible to quantify. No government is likely to admit that it is pursuing a more civilized and humane policy towards its own citizens because of outside advice or pressure. But there are indications that some governments hope for public or tangible recognition of positive steps taken. These might well be encouraged in the direction of still further progress.

It is much more difficult to calculate the reaction of Latin American public opinion. Unquestionably much of it has been positive, although often muted in fear

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of reprisal. There has been considerable favorable, independent press comment. Some Brazilian papers, even while supporting the official reaction to foreign government preparation of a Brazil Human Rights Report, criticized human rights violations and called for a domestic investigation. Many democratic opposition parties and groups have hailed our human rights stand, including the Christian Democrats in Chile, the PRD in the Dominican Republic, some factions of the MDB in Brazil, and the opposition coalition in El Salvador. Catholic church representatives have commented very favorably. And there have been warm words of praise and encouragement from influential intellectuals, journalists, sociologists, etc. Once again, this positive reaction has not been uniform. Various supporters (e.g., some Latin American government officials as well as leaders of the Buenos Aires Jewish community) have quietly cautioned against pushing so hard publicly as to make repressive regimes feel they are being cornered, thus leading them to take even harsher measures.

It is, of course, far too early to make any definitive judgments as to the net impact of our current human rights policy. Many Latin leaders are still trying to sort out where they stand in the face of what they regard as an onslaught on their legitimacy. Some see, or pretend to see, the most recent public human rights statements by United States Government officials as a backing away, at least to some extent, from our previously voiced high priority for human rights. Latin Americans both in and out of government are watching carefully to see whether and how effectively we intend to continue our present human rights commitment. In this connection, there is attached the revealing March 27 comment of Robert Cox, the courageous British editor of the English language Buenos Aires Herald. Mr. Cox predicts President Carter will become "more and more effective" if he sticks to his guns.

Peter Tarnoff  
Executive Secretary

Attachment:

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Editor (Director): Robert Cox

# What if Jimmy sticks to his guns?

FIRST he was Jimmy Who? Then he was Mr Mystery (plotted against Mr Mediocrity). Finally he was Mr President. And by now, perhaps, the American people finally understand Jimmy Carter.

But to the anxious world outside the United States, Mr Carter remains a cypher. Charlatan? Simpleton? Or a deeply religious, profoundly moral man? No one seems to have quite made up his mind.

President Carter's commitment to human rights had as all off-balance from the start. In the short-term, his brush diplomacy seems certain to cause only damage. Beginning with Argentina, a succession of Latin American countries have rejected military aid or arms credits out of hand to protest what they consider to be US intervention in their domestic affairs. To most seasoned observers in this country, Mr Carter's action seemed bound to harden attitudes here. Instead of arousing consciences over alleged human rights violations he has been closing minds. Sanctions won't work, we said and we saw ourselves being proved right as Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador joined Chile in severing an important, if not crucial, link with the US. But now, what comes next? Mr Carter could prove all the seasoned observers wrong if he sticks to his guns. Over the medium term and long term moral force — backed up by cutting off more and more credits — could prevail.

Before he was elected Mr Carter said that there was a moral vacuum in the world and that he intended to fill it. His first pioneering steps have given the impression that he is dangerous, someone personified. He even punched a hole through his own ethics when Mr Vance revealed that in the case of countries where US security was at stake sanctions for alleged human rights violations would not be applied. But he has insisted since then that the US will defend human rights everywhere. Presumably those countries which will not have military aid withdrawn for US security interests will be sanctioned in other ways if they trample human rights underfoot. He seems serious about it. And the next steps, clearly, are going to be economic. The warning given by Patricia Derian, the state department coordinator for human rights and humanitarian affairs, that US financing may be withdrawn for violations of human rights cannot be taken lightly. Argentina can get by without military credits, but economic sanctions could seriously hamper the country's recovery.

Some rethinking needs to be done. If Mr Carter is as serious as he seems, and as determined to give his foreign policy moral content and ethical teeth, some response other than righteous indignation will be called for before long. The truth is that if Mr Carter is not a charlatan or a simpleton, as we might like to believe, and if he is also right in demanding that the South American leaders behave in a more civilised fashion, his commitment to human rights is going to become more and more convincing and his policies more and more effective.

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